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WHAT MUST WE DO NEXT?

ANTI-TERROR MOVES REQUIRED AT HOME

CORD MEYER

Whatever else may result from the latest hostage crisis, it has served wonderfully to concentrate the public mind on what it is practical to do to reduce the chances of a recurrence.

Having had the responsibility within the U.S. intelligence community of coordinating and trying to improve American intelligence coverage of international terrorism in the 1976-77 period, this columnist has checked back with former colleagues and with the current leadership of the intelligence agencies and found a broad consensus on what most needs doing.

An obvious priority is the whole range of defensive security precautions that need to be strengthened to prevent access by armed terrorists to embassies, airports, and other sensitive targets. Fortunately, the extensive report of the Advisory Panel on Overseas Security, chaired by former CIA Deputy Director Bobby Inman, has just been com-

pleted, and Secretary of State George Shultz has been quick to approve the recommendations "in principle."

Under the lash of aroused public opinion, the U.S. Congress is likely to act promptly on this panel's proposal that \$3.5 billion be

spent over a five-year period to rebuild 75 U.S. embassies all around the world that do not meet minimum security standards. Similarly, the world's airlines are holding an emergency meeting in Montreal to agree on ways to tighten their own security.

All this defensive planning and preventive activity is long overdue and will help to lengthen the odds against successful terrorist attacks. But determined and well-financed fanatics will find their way around even the most sophisticated security barriers, so intelligence veterans know that the first and most effective line of defense is prompt and accurate advance information on the terrorists' plans, organizations, and objectives.

Good intelligence based on secret recruitment of human agents within or on the periphery of the terrorist organizations is the key to any sustained success, as the Italian police have demonstrated in their effective campaign to reduce the once formidable Red Brigades to a minor nuisance.

The initial recruitment of a well-placed agent is only the beginning of a dangerous and complex undertaking. The objec-

tive is to preserve the agent's bona fides within the terrorist organization while at the same time using the information he provides to frustrate terrorist attacks without the terrorists realizing that they have been penetrated, or by whom.

Just how successful the CIA and FBI have been in this essential counterintelligence task is something they are obviously not prepared to discuss, but intelligence officials are frank in stating that their work has been made more difficult by a series of damaging leaks to the press from within the intelligence oversight committees of Congress and from within the executive branch itself.

The prevalence of leaks regarding closely held and highly classified operations has led the chief of one of the intelligence

agencies to comment that in dealing with terrorism, "A higher level of confidence in our ability to preserve security would be my first priority." A reputation for being unable to maintain secrecy damages the anti-terrorist effort in three separate, specific ways.

First, cooperation and exchange of information between the intelligence services of allied

and friendly governments are crucial to tracking the movements of international terrorists. But, as the result of recurrent American leaks, there has been a definite reluctance on the part of some allied services to share highly sensitive information with the United States.

SSecond, the willingness of potential agents to accept the risks of working for the United States is much reduced when they are able to read in their press about the exposure of intelligence operations in this country.

Finally, leaks can inadvertently tip off the leaders of terrorist organizations to the fact that they have been penetrated and cause them to increase their compartmentalization and security discipline.

In an atmosphere in which a large bipartisan majority in Congress is eager to tighten security and to strengthen intelligence capabilities, there is growing support for radical reform of the congressional oversight process. As former Republican Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee first proposed last year, the merger of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees into a single joint committee with a much reduced membership and staff provides the best chance of reconciling responsible legislative oversight with the need for secrecy.

In the shadow of Beirut, it's not asking too much to suggest that the Congress discipline itself by drastically reducing the number of those who have to be told the deepest secrets.

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